

Case Study

Integrating Customer Sentiment into Retail Email Best Practices

Background and Client Objectives

A regional retailer realized they lacked a viable email marketing strategy. While they had enrolled many customers into their email subscriber database, their digital outreach followed a “kitchen sink” approach: email frequency, content, and tone were inconsistent. Furthermore, they lacked the consumer insight data and metrics to understand how and when their subscriber base wanted to be contacted and with what type of content, be it offers, promotions, recipes, news, or something entirely unexpected.

Program Design and Methodology

TrendSource Trusted Insight determined that customer surveys would offer the best avenue to optimizing the retailer’s email marketing strategy. While the client already had access to internal email metrics, this data needed to be integrated with customer sentiments to get beyond digital dashboard analyses and uncover the human element—what, precisely, did their most engaged customers want from their email communications?



Using the client’s existing customer email database, TrendSource Trusted Insight developed a survey measuring multiple variables to determine customers’ preferences as well as their likelihood to open. An equal number of surveys were sent randomly to subscribers at every store. It was further determined that no incentive should

be used to gather the information—in a program designed to test consumer engagement, incentivizing consumers to engage would have represented an unnecessary and counterproductive expense. Those willing to click on an email from the store self-selected themselves, for the survey.

Results

After surveying nearly 1,000 members of the client’s loyalty program, TrendSource Trusted Insight constructed an aggregate subscriber profile of the customer most likely to open and click through marketing emails. This aggregate profile included demographic information, hobbies, and lifestyle identifiers, and further challenged the retailer’s assumptions about what determined customer engagement rates. Whereas the grocer had assumed market maturity—the amount of time a particular store had been open in its particular market—determined subscriber engagement, the results indicated that it was something entirely unexpected by the client. Being able to target

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customers most likely to open and engage their marketing emails proved valuable to the client who now tailors communications to their most devoted followers around their interests.

Recommendations to the Client

Armed with this new information, the client was prepared to utilize retail email best practices informed by customer sentiments, and began to establish a standardized email calendar. This strategy was further informed by Trusted Insight's answers to the following question:

- What should the subject line contain and how long should it be?
- How long should the email be and what it should be about?
- What type of offer or promotion should be included?
- Which days of the week were the best to send emails?
- How frequently emails should be sent?

Future programs will focus on mobile engagement while also taking a deeper dive into optimizing content.